

Great then was our astonishment and delight when, in less than two months, we received another letter from our bishop informing us that the Sacred Congregation of Rites had left it to his discretion as the Local Bishop to approve of the title and statue of Our Lady. So, Bishop Smith graciously granted us permission to erect a statue of Mary under the title of "Our Lady of Combermere" and to have it blessed.

But the question of how Our Lady of Combermere should look remained unanswered. If we were to have a statue, we had to find a sculptor to make it and give him or her an idea of what we wanted. So we prayed. What else could we do? We just didn't know how Our Lady of Combermere looked.

We prayed and thought and discussed the matter. A large donation of Catholic magazines had come to us and one day we decided to look them over. Perhaps we would find in one of them a picture that would strike all of us as the very statue we wanted to represent Our Lady of Combermere.

The very first magazine we opened showed us the one! It was the photograph of a statue showing Our Lady hastening with arms wide open to welcome and embrace someone... against a background very similar to ours. She seemed to fit right in. Everyone at Madonna House decided that **this was it!**

The picture did not give the name of the sculptor. The caption revealed, however, that the statue was located in Santa Barbara, California, and was called "The Questing Madonna." Our Lady of Combermere was definitely a questing Madonna in our minds, for she was the patroness of our Apostolate questing and seeking souls for Jesus, her Son.

We wrote to the mayor of Santa Barbara, asking who the sculptor was and received, by return mail, a most gracious answer giving us the details. The sculptor was a woman, a well-known artist, Miss Francis Rich of that city.

We wrote to Miss Rich. We were afraid that such a great artist's fees would be beyond our ability to pay. So we told her very frankly how the whole thing had come about and how we had selected her statue.

To our astonishment and joy Miss Rich graciously waived any fee for herself. She loved the story of Our Lady of Combermere. She felt very happy, she said, to be able to bring her to Combermere. All she asked was the price of pouring of the bronze statue to be made from her model. This work had to be done in Florence, Italy, where the craftsmanship was perfect. We would also pay the shipping charges.

We agreed at once, although we didn't have the money. We felt sure that if Our Lady of Combermere wanted to come here, she would provide it. We started a bourse in her honor, and the money was there when needed.

The statue arrived in Combermere on April 26th, 1960 and was erected, on a base of three thousand pounds of cement, on May 17th, the thirteenth anniversary of the opening of Madonna House. Three weeks later— on June 8th, 1960—the Bishop of our diocese came to Madonna House and officially installed and blessed the statue. It was an awesome moment for all of us and for the hundreds of friends, including 22 priests, who came to share it with us. ** (excerpted from: www.madonnahouse.org)

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

Our Lady of Combermere

***Village of Combermere
Ontario, Canada***



**Her arms, are open to receive us,
and it is receptivity of her welcome
that draws out the poison of bitterness
we sometimes carry,
and replaces it with the oil of mercy, tenderness and hope.**

Our Lady of Combermere

Origin

*Prayers to the Virgin Mary under the title "Our Lady of Combermere" began in the late 1940's at the Catholic Madonna House Apostolate founded by Catherine Doherty in the small village of Combermere, in Ontario, Canada. As the title began to gain popularity among the apostolate's friends and neighbors, a woman (who claimed to have received an answer to prayer through the use of this title) offered to donate the money required to have a life-sized bronze statue erected for a Marian shrine to Our Lady of Combermere.

*(excerpted from: en.wikipedia.org)

How the Statue and Shrine came to Combermere

**It all began quite naturally and simply. It began in the early days of our foundation of Madonna House, which opened on May 17, 1947, when we had but five acres. Madonna House stood alone, with no buildings 'round about... not even a woodshed, ice-house or tool shed.

Those were pioneering days and no mistake! Those were the days of frozen woodpiles covered with a couple feet of snow that had to be brushed off and knocked loose before the sticks could be carried into our tiny kitchen.

Those were the days when the paths of snow leading from the front and back doors of Madonna House to the little road that connected us with the rest of the world seemed miles long. There was no fast-rising yeast and bread had to be started the day before. They were days of hard work and many inconveniences, yet glad and joyous days.

What could have been more simple and natural when the pumps would not start, and feet and legs were numb from pushing the gasoline engine pedals, than to call on Our Lady—Mary, the Mother of Jesus—giving her the local musical name of Combermere? "O please, dear Lady of Combermere, help me to start this washing machine... this pump."

Or again: "Help me to loosen this wood," or "finish this long path in the snow," or "please, Lady of Combermere, look after this bread; make it rise." When the wet wood didn't start burning, as burn we expected it to, an invocation would easily come to one's lips. Such little prayers are so normal that anyone would understand them.

Yes, it was easy to call her affectionately by a familiar, loved name. This is what we did among ourselves, in our apostolic family, thinking nothing of it.

To people interested in Our Lady, titles are like endearing names, expressions of great love. Easily we say: "Our Lady of the Kitchen... Our Lady of the Library... Our Lady of the Gardens." So it was with us, "Our Lady of Combermere." We used our little prayers with love and gratitude; and Our Lady helped us in the needs and chores of our daily living.

A priest brought us a poem about Our Lady of Comermere. Then on the

occasion of the blessing of our original chapel (December 8, 1953), he brought us a song of Our Lady of Combermere, the music for which had been composed by a priest-friend of his. We adopted that song, made it our hymn and sang it on many occasions. Time passed. One day several priests visited us. We are truly blessed and honored by the visits of many good and holy priests. They too were curious about our hymn and our prayers. Semi—jokingly they asked if we had ever thought of how Our Lady of Combermere should look.

None of us had thought about that. But as the discussion continued we decided that, if we had to draw a picture of Our Lady of Combermere we would place her near our lovely blue Madawaska River, which flows very close to Madonna House, her arms open in a gesture of welcome and benediction.

One day a few weeks later the mail brought us a picture of Our Lady, drawn by a nun, a Hungarian refugee. It was a nice picture, but not quite what we had imagined Our Lady of Combermere would look like. However we were glad to have it. We framed the sketch and hung it in a place of honor.

Sometime later a priest gave us a lovely prayer to go with the picture. It was truly a beautiful prayer. We copied it. Well, here we were, in a house called Madonna House, praying to her as Our Lady of Combermere - a title never given her before.

Every year Madonna House runs a Summer School of the Lay Apostolate. To the Summer School of 1956 came a woman who immediately fell in love with Our Lady of Combermere. She took a supply of the pictures and prayers back with her to the United States.

A few months later we received a letter from the woman saying that she had received a great favor after making a novena to Our Lady of Combermere. In gratitude to her she would like to give us a statue - life-sized, preferably in bronze - to be placed outdoors at Madonna House, thus making a shrine to Our Lady of Combermere! She would beg money to get such a statue.

We were quite worried for we knew that one cannot have a public shrine to Our Lady under a title that has not been approved by Rome. So we wrote to our local Bishop, the Most Rev. William J. Smith, Bishop of Pembroke, explaining the situation.

He replied that no new title could be used, or funds collected, until the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome had been consulted. He said that he would gladly write to the Sacred Congregation concerning the possible use of this title. He asked us to tell the woman in the USA not to start collecting money until the answer came from Rome.

We did this, of course, immediately. The lady replied that she would wait, we were not to worry. Our Lady of Combermere, she was sure, would see that we received a favorable answer, and that it would be soon! We smiled upon reading her letter — how wonderful simple faith is! But I must confess, we did not quite share it with her.